STATEMENT BY AMBASSADOR TAYE ATSKE-SILASSIE, PERMANENT REPRESENTATIVE OF ETHIOPIA TO THE UNITED NATIONS AT THE HUMANITARIAN AFFAIRS SEGMENT OF ECOSOC; JUNE 21 2022

Thank you, Mr. Chairperson,

1. I would like to start by congratulating you for chairing this year’s Humanitarian Affairs Segment. I also express our profound thanks to the Bureau and the Secretariat, for the work that went into the organization of this session.

2. This year’s humanitarian segment is taking place at a time when humanity is extremely challenged by the devastating humanitarian consequences of extreme impacts of climate change, the Covid-19 global pandemic, and conflict. In light of this, we follow the Humanitarian Segment with great interest and look forward to successful deliberations.

Mr. Chair,

3. When it comes to the Covid-19 global pandemic, we continue to face the health, economic and social risks of the pandemic. In Africa, more than a quarter of a million lives are lost. Due to the egregious vaccine inequity, only 17 percent of the continent’s population is vaccinated. Health centers are still under the pressure of the pandemic; last week, African CDC reported, some countries are facing another wave of the pandemic. The restrictions in trade, transportation, tourism, decrease in remittance, and the resultant decline in economic growth, continue to challenge the Continent. By all measures, Africa is still dealing with the pandemic, not a post-pandemic reality.
4. When it comes to climate related emergency: it must be acknowledged, the crisis is a result of multiple, overlapping and accumulated causes. In Africa, drought and faltering rain in the past four years; locust infestation that destroyed agricultural produce for three consecutive years; political instability and conflicts have exhausted the coping mechanism of our communities.

5. Due to this, 113 million people in Africa are in need of humanitarian aid, of which 48 million are refugees, asylum seekers and internally displaced persons. 40 million of this population is in the Horn of Africa. My Country Ethiopia, Kenya, Somalia and Sudan are home to the greater number of the people in need.

**Mr. Chair**

6. In this context, while recovery from the humanitarian emergencies requires a great deal of effort by the countries concerned, effective and targeted international cooperation is also needed. To contribute to the discussion on recovery, I would like to mention some of the measures Ethiopia has taken to minimize the impacts of the emergency:

➢ **First**, anticipating the continuation of the drought, we have intensified food production in areas outside of the drought zone. Increased policy focus and investment in semi-mechanization of agriculture and expansion of irrigation helped us narrow the production deficit created by the drought.
Second, building on indigenous practices of resource sharing, the Government created incentives to foster inter-community cash and non-cash resources sharing as well as distribution of animal feed and other resources. This intervention proved beneficial not only for facing the emergencies but also for reinforcing the local practice that underpin our coping mechanisms.

Third, we expanded social safety net programmes to cater for populations that are affected by the multi-layered causes, including the elderly, persons with disabilities, and low-income households in urban areas. Furthermore, we increase resources for school feeding initiatives, which helped us support children and significantly decrease school drop-out rates.

Fourth, to prevent depletion of household asset, we implement a programme whereby, the Government provides cash and non-cash assistance to help families preserve their assets. We also encourage the sale of and even procure cattle from our herding community to enable families gain from their animal resource instead of losing them to the drought. This increases the capacity of households to recover fast and reinstate their asset after the drought.

Fifth, we have intensive forest, water and soil protection programmes. Our Green Legacy programme that is part of the African Green Belt initiative already saw the planting of 18 million tree seedlings. Fruit tree afforestation prgrammes
are underway with the double pronged objectives of ensuring food security and afforestation.

**Mr. Chair,**

7. Ethiopia has tremendous gratitude for the international community for stepping up its efforts to enhance humanitarian support, including for the above stated recovery plans. Taking this opportunity, we echo the call by the UN agencies for the scaling up of tangible support to affected populations. The UN system should work closely with the Government to enhance the coordination of emergency humanitarian assistance.

8. We also need to depoliticize humanitarian assistance. Allocation of the required resource is futile unless assistance reaches the people in need. This entails humanitarian agencies to function in full compliance with the international framework for humanitarian assistance and respect for international and national laws. Any level of compromise on the principles of humanity, neutrality, impartiality, and independence undermines the whole effort to deliver the much-needed humanitarian assistance. We need to put a stop to instrumentalization of humanitarian assistance to undermine the authority of governments and sovereignty of states.

**Finally, Mr. Chair,**

9. I would like to reiterate my point on the sustainable solution to emergencies. For developing countries, resource used for humanitarian emergencies is resource taken away from development programmes. With the absorption of domestic
resource on emergencies, sustainable development programmes and activities get sidelined. This vicious cycle is the reason we talk of emergency assistance due to drought in the 21\textsuperscript{st} century, using the same vernacular we applied decades before.

10. On this basis, I call on the UN system to bring greater attention to national programmes for the increase in agricultural productivity, afforestation schemes, such as Ethiopia’s green Legacy, and projects that build the resilience of states against the impacts of all disasters, including climate change.

I thank you Mr. Chairman